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ON A LEE SHORE

JESSE METCALF FUND, 1901

WINSLOW HOMER

WINSLOW HOMER.

THERE are many artists who deserve serious consideration in any attempt to discuss the history of American painting, and among these Winslow Homer occupies an important place. It may not be correct to call him America's most representative artist, but in many respects that is what he is. An artist, so important not only for his own work, but for his influence on those who came after him, should be represented in our American museums by the best examples obtainable, both in painting and water-color. At the present time the Rhode Island School of Design possesses six examples of Homer's work, each in its way being characteristic.

One of the decidedly important paintings in the permanent collection of the Museum, "On a Lee Shore," shows Homer at his best, according to his enthusiastic admirers. Its purchase in 1901, from the Jesse Metcalf Fund, secured a masterpiece of expression and study comparable with any in other public or private collections. The painting was finished in 1900, as may be gathered from the letter sent by the artist to the dealers, Messrs. M. O'Brien & Son of Chicago, dated October 19, 1900. In it Homer says—"I have a *very excellent* painting "On a Lee Shore," 39 x 39 . . . I will send it to you if you desire to see it. *Good* things are scarce. Frame not ordered yet, but I can send it by the time McKinley is elected.

"Yours respectfully,

"Winslow Homer."

The painting is one of the great canvases resulting from Homer's study of the Atlantic Ocean at Prout's Neck, twelve miles from Portland, Maine. Here the rocky cliffs are quite high, even for Maine, and the artist found abundant opportunity to analyze the restless ocean, the blanket of fog, and the foam of water breaking over hidden ledges. To Homer, an angry sea had its own message, and he was at his best when he painted the ocean in a storm. He closely studied its ever-changing moods,

preferred its periods of unrest, and frequently painted it without any human figure in the foreground to give scale and a personal element. All of this is seen in the canvas, "On a Lee Shore," and the student of the painting appreciates "the majestic sense of elemental power, the irresistible onrush, the splendor of untameable forces, that make of this marine piece one of the most unforgettable and impressive visions of the sea ever placed upon canvas. It is a page of transcendent beauty and overwhelming might. In it abides the high and solemn poetry of the vasty deep. The composition is singularly strong and novel. The commotion and turmoil of the surf in the foreground is a shade beyond anything in the history of marine painting, and a touch of human interest is added by the little schooner in the offing which is making a brave fight to keep away from the dangerous coast. The passion for truth which had been the main guiding principle of the artist's whole life here found its greatest culmination and its most perfect form of expression."—*Life and works of Winslow Homer, W. H. Downes, p. 209.*

We are told that Homer was practically a self-taught artist, developing a power of analysis and grasp of essentials which made him great. His earlier works are therefore of interest, as illustrating some of the stages through which he passed. In the Museum collection there is a small painting of a boy and girl fishing, dated 1879. In it the artist clearly shows the influence of the period in which he is living, and it is perhaps reminiscent of his work of the previous summer at Houghton Farm, Mountville, New York, not far from Cornwall. A water-color, showing a girl seated on a hillside, with the daisies and tall grass about her, is certainly of that period, for it is dated 1878. The same model is seen in other water-colors of that time.

In 1880 Homer worked at Gloucester and Annisquam. The Museum owns two water-colors, both dated and executed at that time. One is of a New England hillside, with a girl feeding sheep. It is rather

sketchy in treatment and thin in color, but is free and full of spirit. The other is a ploughing scene on a New England hillside. The slope of the ground gives opportunity for the representation of a sky full of color and cloud masses in movement. The broken surface of the newly-ploughed area makes a sharp contrast with the rest of the composition. In the foreground is a young man in profile, with

England, and remarkable studies of hunting life in the Adirondacks. To this last series belongs the water-color showing the dogs in the boat.

It has often been said that Homer's genius lay in his quick grasp of essentials, elimination of unnecessary detail, power to express distinct characteristics and an impatience of academic restraint. All of these features appear in the group of repre-



FISHING. [9½ x 7¾]

WINSLOW HOMER

ISAAC C. BATES BEQUEST

trousers tucked into high boots, engaged in adjusting the harness of the horse. In the distance is seen approaching a second horse and driver. The whole water-color is significant of the artist's close study of his subject, and especially of his ability to catch the local spirit.

The last water-color is dated 1889, and was made while Homer was living at Prout's Neck. A number of hunting-dogs are grouped in a square-nosed punt on a quiet pond, whose wooded shores give exceptional opportunity for the study of masses of foliage. In the period of 1880 to 1889 the artist had grown in powers of conception and expression. His range of subject was equally varied, including scenes from the West Indies and negro life, paintings of the sea, sketches of New

sentative water-colors and the superb painting by this distinctly American artist, which invite attention in the Museum collection.

L. E. R.

AN URBINO FRUIT DISH.

THERE has been added to the permanent collections, through a recent gift, a fine example of Italian maiolica of Urbino manufacture. It is a fruit dish 4¾ inches high and 13 inches in diameter, with scalloped edges and sides. Its place of manufacture and the class of pottery to which it belongs are of such interest and importance as to be worthy of consideration. The word maiolica is applied to a ware which is of soft pottery and covered with an opaque glaze. This



GIRL AND DAISIES. Water-color [$6\frac{3}{4} \times 5\frac{3}{4}$]
ISAAC C. BATES BEQUEST

WINSLOW HOMER



GIRL AND SHEEP. Water-color [$8\frac{1}{2} \times 13$]
ISAAC C. BATES BEQUEST

WINSLOW HOMER



BOY AND HORSE. Water-color [9 x 13]
ISAAC C. BATES BEQUEST

WINSLOW HOMER



WAITING FOR THE HUNT. Water-color
GIFT OF JESSE METCALF, 1894

WINSLOW HOMER

is characteristic of the products of Spain, the Balearic Islands and Italy. The term maiolica is the common Italian name for this ware, and is therefore particularly applied to those dishes which were of Italian manufacture and Renaissance and later in date. It is apart from the subject to note the many cities where maiolica was produced. Chief among them were Urbino, Gubbio, Pesaro, Castel-Durante and Faenza. All of these factories were under



FRUIT DISH Italian, Urbino, 16th Cen.
Recent Gift

the protection of the local ruling family, and attained prominence in proportion to the power of these lords. It is therefore not surprising to find that Urbino was of first importance owing to the patronage of the Montefeltro family, and especially of Duke Federigo and his son. Such importance did the manufacture attain that we even have records of the names of some of the artists who flourished there, such as Xanto and the Fontana family.

It is not fair to Italian maiolica to judge it by the same standards of excellence as a painting or a piece of sculpture; it must be compared with similar products from other lands. A lead glaze was first used in Italy in the fourteenth century, according to Italian writers, and the fine lustrous glaze of oxide of tin and silicious sand came in use not long after. The red ware of the country was covered with this

stanniferous glaze, thus securing a smooth surface, clear white in color and of true enamel texture, on which the decoration in colors could be applied. Urbino ware was made in the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries, the best being produced in the sixteenth. Throughout this period the potters made little change in the body or glaze of their wares. It is somewhat curious that they never cared to learn from the Saracens and Persians the hard, brilliant silicious glaze which gave these oriental wares such lasting qualities of surface. On the other hand, the potters made use of methods used by the Moors of Spain and Majorca.

The fruit dish of recent acquisition is unlike much of the Urbino ware, in that it is decorated on the outside as well as within. This is probably due to the opportunity for additional decoration offered by the height of the bowl. Like the rest of the pottery from Urbino this dish has an even, smooth glaze. In general, where grotesque decoration is used, the ground is pure white. Our dish comes into this class. It has a medallion in the center with a representation of Galatea and Cupid riding on dolphins, freely painted in ochre, brown and light blue. The rest of the decoration is a graceful all-over treatment with dolphins, birds, putti figures, scrolls and mythological creatures, in the same colors as the medallion, to which little details of black are added. In addition there are four medallions with human figures in white on a black ground.

The use of the Greek legend of Galatea and Cupid is worthy of notice as emphasizing the Renaissance interest in classical subjects, reflected in so commercial an object as this fruit dish. The grotesques are distinctly reminiscent of Pompeian and Roman decoration, interpreted with a freedom characteristic of the Renaissance. The term "grotesque" is really a misnomer, since it properly applies to the characteristic Gothic decoration as worked out in wood and stone. There, the grotesque calls for such exaggeration

of the human form as excites laughter or tears. In decoration similar to that on the fruit dish there is no appeal to the emotion, but rather to a love of the graceful, flowing line, the expression of imagination, the delight of a free-brush design, well rendered, and the happy balance of color. The form of decoration shows two sources of origin, the Roman, with its area cutting, and use of mythological creatures, birds and griffins, and the Oriental with its use of ribbons, stems and flowers. This style was also copied in the wares of Rome and Ferrara. Although the fruit dish in the illustration was doubtless not the work of such a master as one of the Fontana family, it is characteristic of the general spirit and excellence to be found in all the work of the period.

L. E. R.

ANNUAL COSTUME PARTY.

IT was especially appropriate that the annual costume party of the students, alumni and friends, which was held in Memorial Hall on the evening of April 22nd, should voice the spirit of patriotism and answer the question, "Why is America?" In settings quite as elaborate as have ever been made by the students of the school, and expressed in an impressionistic manner, decidedly modern and poster-like in spirit, there passed before the audience a long series of historic personages and attendant groups, all in costume. Among these were Uncle Sam, Leif Ericson, Columbus, Roger Williams, Washington, Lafayette, Abraham Lincoln and others. Symbolic figures of Liberty, Columbia and Justice were also used. In their proper places in the spectacle were introduced Norsemen, Indians, Dutch, French, Italians, Spanish, Puritans, Germans, Austrians, Russians, Norwegians and Swedes, Danes and Irish, Scotch and Japanese. While the spectacle was in pantomime, there were featured group and solo dances. The climax of the evening came with a rapid grouping of citizens with army and navy about the figure of Columbia. As this group was formed the large

American flag dropped behind it, while audience and actors joined in the national anthem. The grand march and general dancing concluded the evening. The conception of the spectacle came from Mr. William E. Brigham, head of the Department of Decorative Design, who also was producer and stage manager.

The spectacle of the evening voiced the willingness of the School of Design to assist at a time of national crisis, for the proceeds were donated to the National Red Cross. In addition those who participated learned much of stage-craft and costume details.

NOTES.

ELECTION OF TRUSTEES.—At the annual meeting of the Corporation of the Rhode Island School of Design held on Wednesday, June 6th, Miss Lida Shaw King and Dr. G. Alder Blumer were re-elected as trustees for six years.

EXHIBITION OF COLOR PRINTING.—Through the courtesy of the Newark Museum Association the Rhode Island School of Design was privileged to show during the month of May an exhibition illustrating the art of color-printing. Not only did the specimens of this important branch of applied art show the steps from the original drawings and several plates or blocks to the finished work, but there were also shown specimens of the materials used, and photographs illustrating methods of use. The exhibition proved of great interest to students and visiting public.

SUMMER EXHIBITION.—The Museum avails itself of the opportunity presented in the summer to have an exhibition of the gifts and loans for the year. So numerous are these, that they have overflowed from the two special galleries to other parts of the Museum. The unusual quality and variety of the accessions will be a source of gratification to every friend of the School of Design.

LIBRARY.

The most important additions to the Library for the quarter are given below.

Benjamin, Asher—Reprint of the Country builder's assistant, the American builder's companion, the Rudiments of architecture, the Practical house carpenter, Practice of architecture. 1917.

Eberlein, H. D.—Architecture of Colonial America. 1915.

FitzGerald, Desmond—Dodge Macknight, water-color painter. 1916.

Guiffrey, Jules—Histoire de la tapisserie depuis le moyen age jusqu'à nos jours. 1886.

Hammond, J. M.—Colonial mansions of Maryland and Delaware. 1914.

Holm, Adolph—History of Greece from its commencement to the close of the independence of the Greek nation. 4v. 1894-96.

Murray, A. S.—Handbook of Greek archaeology. 1892.

Tiffany, L. C.—Art work of Louis C. Tiffany. 1914.

Wilstach, Paul—Mount Vernon: Washington's home and the nation's shrine. 1916.

Wise, H. C., and Beidleman, H. F.—Colonial architecture for those about to build. 1913.

SIGNS OF PROGRESS.

JUNE, 1916—JUNE, 1917.

Age of institution, forty years.

School

Total Registration	1241
Day Classes	235
Evening Classes	756
Saturday Classes	218
Special Class in Manual Training	32

States represented, 8

Number of teachers, 65

Diplomas . . . 33 (from six departments)

Certificates . . . 27 (from six departments)

Museum

Attendance	65,682
Number of children from public Schools	1849
Number of additions	545
Special Exhibitions held	19

Library

Volumes added	283
Post cards added	214
Lantern-slides	890
Reproductions added	353
Volumes circulated	4782
Reproductions circulated	13,381
Periodicals circulated	628

Membership

Number of honorary members	1
" " life members	42
" " governing members	158
" " annual members	588

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MEMBERSHIP

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Governing Members for Life, who pay at one time	\$100.00
Annual Governing Members, who pay annual dues of	\$10.00
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NOTICE

THIS VOLUME IS INCOMPLETE

**THE FOLLOWING ISSUES ARE NOT
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